



281

Japanese Art

I. RELIGIOUS ART

THE LITTLE LIBRARY OF ART

METHUEN

JAPANESE ART

I. RELIGIOUS ART

THE LITTLE LIBRARY
OF ART



RAM ADVANI
Bookseller
LUCKNOW

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

© FERNAND HAZAN, PARIS 1958
PRINTED IN FRANCE

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

JAPANESE ART

RELIGIOUS ART

BY

ALAIN LEMIÈRE

I

METHUEN AND CO. LTD

36 ESSEX STREET . STRAND . LONDON WC2

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1959

I. 1

CATALOGUE NO. 5934/U

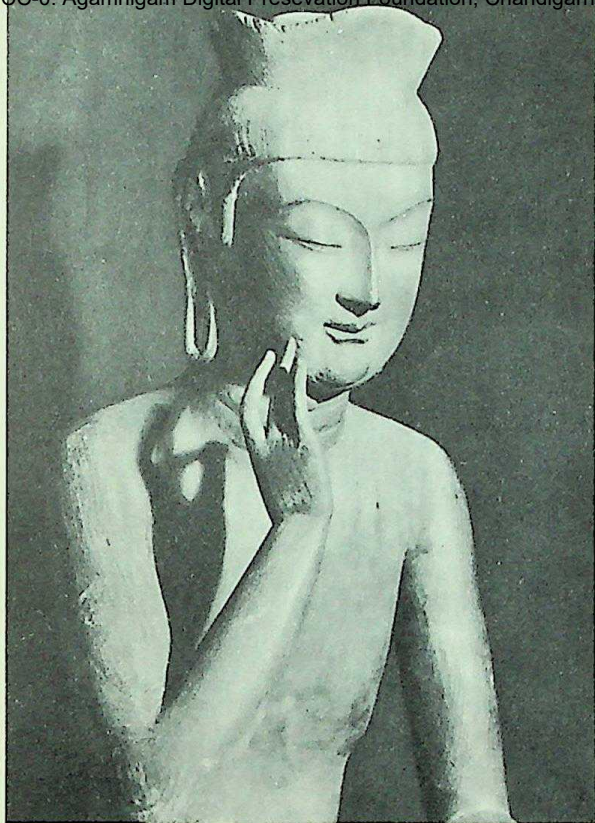
Shinto and Buddhism have played such a part in shaping the soul and sensibility of the Japanese, and have so influenced their conception and representation of the world, that one cannot form an idea, even a superficial one, of their art and their civilisation without some general understanding of these two religions, any more than one can study Romanesque and Gothic art in ignorance of Christianity.

As the ancient myth has it, Japan was created by the god Izanagi and the goddess Izanami—the Active and the Passive Principle—who from on high on the floating Bridge of the sky formed the sacred islands from the drops of water that fell from the jewel-lance they had plunged into the great ocean. And from immemorial times the country has been known as "The land of the Kami", that is to say, the supernatural beings begotten by the Gods at the same time as Man. Present everywhere, the Kami breathe life into all that exists; Sun, Moon, winds, waters, mountains, animals and plants as well as the warrior's arms, the craftsman's tools,

Moreover Shinto—the Way of the gods, the Kami— became especially concerned with the worship of the Emperor, the Tenno, grandson of the Sun Goddess, and with that of the Ancestors become Kami on their deaths, as well as with the worship of Nature, the inexhaustible Life Force animating the multitudinous creation.

No sacred image in their temples, but austere metaphysical symbols: a sword, a mirror, a jewel. It was for Nature alone, for Nature virgin and mother,—to whom sacred gateways (*torii*) were erected where the beauty of the world most directly touched the heart of man,—to show forth the divine and not for images, since external nature and nature in the heart of man should be one and indivisible in the All. Was not that the symbolic meaning of the Mirror of Truth, one of the three "treasures" of Shinto, the mirror to reveal man's own image?

No other people shows an equal feeling for nature. This feeling is so deep and so integral a part of heart and soul that the word "nature" does not exist in the Japanese language, nor is there a word for "fine arts". Perhaps the Japanese had never tried to dissociate himself from the world around him and never tried to express an individual emotion inspired by the beauty of the world, but was content to listen spellbound to the spontaneous song which Nature made him sing and could pass the inspiration straight on without personal intervention.



MAITREYA. WOOD. EARLY VII CENTURY.



YAKUSHI NYORAI. BRONZE.
END OF VII CENTURY.

But there came a time when the people
could no longer stay content with the Mirror
—the soul being no longer able to identify
itself with that in its search for the Divine—

and felt the need for the medium of a standard image to find the "god" to adore. It was then that Buddhism which had reached Japan from Korea and China at the beginning of the 6th century began to take strong root, bringing with it the gentle figures of the historic Buddha Sakyamuni, of the Buddhas of contemplation (Dhyani-Buddhas) emanations of Primordial Wisdom, and of the Bodhisattvas who wait to enter into the bliss of Nirvana until all beings have been saved.

Monks, architects, painters and sculptors were continually arriving from the continent. Daughters of the nobility became nuns. Temples were built where one could pray at the feet of the Compassionate Ones with human features but with haloes of transcendental wisdom (plates 2 and 3). Soon Shotoku Taishi, one of the greatest of Japanese statesmen, undertook the task of spreading through the whole empire the teaching of Buddha and the high culture of China and Chinese writing, knowledge of which was necessary to go deeply into the sacred texts (*Sutras*), as well as the moral precepts of Confucius and the T'ang poets.

The Buddhism of the earliest Japanese sects can scarcely yet be distinguished from the sombre Buddhism of India, born in a land of ascetic metaphysicians and starving Fakirs. By continually analysing phenomena in order relentlessly to unmask the illusion of the world and of the human "I"—that phantom which Illumination would one day efface in the name of a higher, harsh reality—it deprived every action, every thought of the humble, living

reality which gave it all its charm for a people delighting in a visual world. This doctrine could never have flowered on Japanese soil had it not become adapted to the deep longings and truest inspirations of Japanese sensibility.

But already in this land of typhoons, earthquakes and terrible fires the great Buddhist theme of impermanence, the law of a world of evanescent dew, had found an echo which was to nourish its art and literature for centuries.

*It seems to scatter the snow
The storm that in the garden
Makes the flowers fall...
No ! What falls and passes
Is myself.*

(12th century)

The Tendai sect would soon be teaching that everything, animals, plants, and even drops of water and specks of dust, would one day become Buddha, for they had possessed his fundamental nature from everlasting and were one with him. Thus an all embracing brotherly compassion came to bind a new link of love—like the smiles of lover and beloved—between man and everything in the world which was pressing up like him towards the Light.

Likewise, at a time of civil wars and terrible calamities, a hope which excluded no one, not even the poorest of the common people, developed round the conception of Amida Buddha (plates 2 and 11), the most consoling



MAITREYA. WOOD. EARLY VII CENTURY.

aspect of Buddhism which was spread by the sect of the Pure Land. From then onwards, besides the deliverance to be won by relentless personal effort was the offer of salvation granted by the sole grace of Amida.

Unable to find again the élan and fervour of former days the men of "the last times of the Law" had no other resource but to abandon themselves to the divine power and mercy of the Buddha of Light. Only faith and love were needed and it was enough to repeat as the cry of the heart calling for help the invocation: "*Namu Amida Butsu*" (I adore thee, oh Buddha of Light!) for the doors of the Paradise of the Pure Land to be opened for the dying. For the very name of Amida contained the power to save all creatures.

Brooks rippling, birds singing, leaves rustling in the wind, all repeated the all-powerful invocation, *Nembutsu*. The myriad lives of animate nature were all pressing forward to deliverance and the state of Buddha, often with better success than man, to whom they served as example and guide. As for the Kami they still haunted mountains and plains as before and they too played their part in the life of the Japanese. For Shinto and Buddhism had not been slow to come to happy terms with one another; primitive rites were combined with the recitation of the sutras, and the most important Kami finally became so closely identified with various emanations of the primordial Buddha that their iconography became confused.

For, in the infinitely tolerant atmosphere of the Far East, and in the most delightful, and



PURNA. DRY LACQUER. ABOUT 735.

two religions bent on seeking the common end of men's salvation, should fail to join as allies?

So too the ancient genius of China and the budding genius of Japan joined together. The earliest Japanese paintings and sculptures were strongly influenced by Chinese and Korean art (pl. 2, 3 and 5), and one cannot be certain that some were not the work of artists coming from the continent. However something especially pleasing and seductive at once began to distinguish them; they reflect a more exquisite graciousness and a more delicate sensibility; they knew better how to portray, in the smile of a god, all the aspirations of a people (pl. 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12). At the other extreme, in representations of the terrifying aspects of Buddhas, that of Fudo (pl. 6) for example, or the divinities that guard the law, there is a violence and fierceness of expression that testify to the contrasting pole of the Japanese spirit; the spirit of the warrior pitiless in action and ever ready to strike down, who sheaths himself in inflexible harshness even against those whom he loves the best but whom he will deliberately sacrifice where honour or faith to his feudal lord is concerned.

LIST OF PLATES

PLATES IN BLACK AND WHITE

- i. *Maitreya* (Miroku Bosatsu), the Buddha of the future, the coming Saviour of the world. Wood: Beginning of the viiith Century. Koryu-ji, Kyoto.
- ii. *Yakushi Nyorai* (Bhaisajyaguru), the Lord of the Eastern Paradise. Bronze: end of the viiith Century. Yakushiji, Nara.
- iii. *Maitreya* (or *Nyorin Kannon?*). Wood: first half of viiith Century. Chucuji, Nara.
- iv. *Purna*, one of the great disciples of Buddha. Dry lacquer: about 735. Kofuku-ji, Nara.

PLATES IN COLOUR

1. *Kichijo-ten*, a Japanese version of Sridevi, the Hindu goddess of happiness. Painted wood: xiith Century. Joruri-ji, Kyoto.
- 2 and 3. Frescoes from the Golden Pavilion of the Horyu-ji at Nara, one of the, great places of Japanese art (about the year 660).
Plate 2. *Amida buddha*. Detail.
Plate 3. *Bodhisattva*. Detail.
4. *Sutra of causes and effects*. Makimono (hand scroll with the painting running the length of the scroll) with very primitive pictures: viiith Century. Detail.

Painting on hemp: end of viiith Century.

6. *Fudo Myoo* "yellow" (Acalanatha), chief of the protecting kings of Buddhism.

Kakemono (hanging scroll) of the xiith Century. Manjuin, Kyoto.

7. *The Bodhisattva Fugen* (Samantabhadra), especially venerated by the Tendai sect.

Painting. Detail. xiith Century. National Museum, Tokyo.

8. *Shaka Nyorai* (Sakyamuni, the historic Buddha).

Hanging scroll: xiith Century.

9. *The priest Tzu-en* (Jion Daishi), disciple of Hsuan Tsang.

Painting on silk. Detail. xiith Century.

10. *Buddha arising from his golden coffin* to greet his mother come to meet him from the sky.

Silk panel. Detail. xiith Century.

11. *Amida rising behind the mountains* as the Sun of Compassion. Detail from a triptych. xiith Century. Konkai Komyo-ji, Kyoto.

12. *The bonze Kobo Daishi as a child*.

Hanging scroll on silk. End of the xiith Century.

13. *The monk Hsuan Tsang* coming back from China with the text of the sutras which he had gone to seek.

Hanging scroll. xiith Century.

14. Illustration from the *Saddharmapundarika-sutra* shewing a lady of the court.

Handscroll of the xiith Century. Detail.

15. Scene in the *Jigoku Zoshi* (Buddhist hell). Handscroll of the xiith Century. Detail.



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



楚晉觀筆乃建發鼓

伯也伯也伯也伯也

或四海水諸仙人來

各各頂戴挖透潭門

如是及至過及諸臣

悉已頂戴侍授與王

時王所以太子頂以

七寶巾而用付之又

呼大鼓馬昇唱言今

王龍德志建以為太

子今時虛空天龍夜

又人非人等作天徒

舉無口同音讚言善

哉善哉善哉善哉

國立太子時妙八國

王亦於是日同立太子

今時太子好王土迥

王即降許時王即真

太子并諸月臣前使

導從案行國界汝復

前行利王田所即使

止息想浮樹下者諸

耕人今時淨居天化

作填虫鳥隨味之太

子見已起慈龍心衆

主千時子田王衆

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



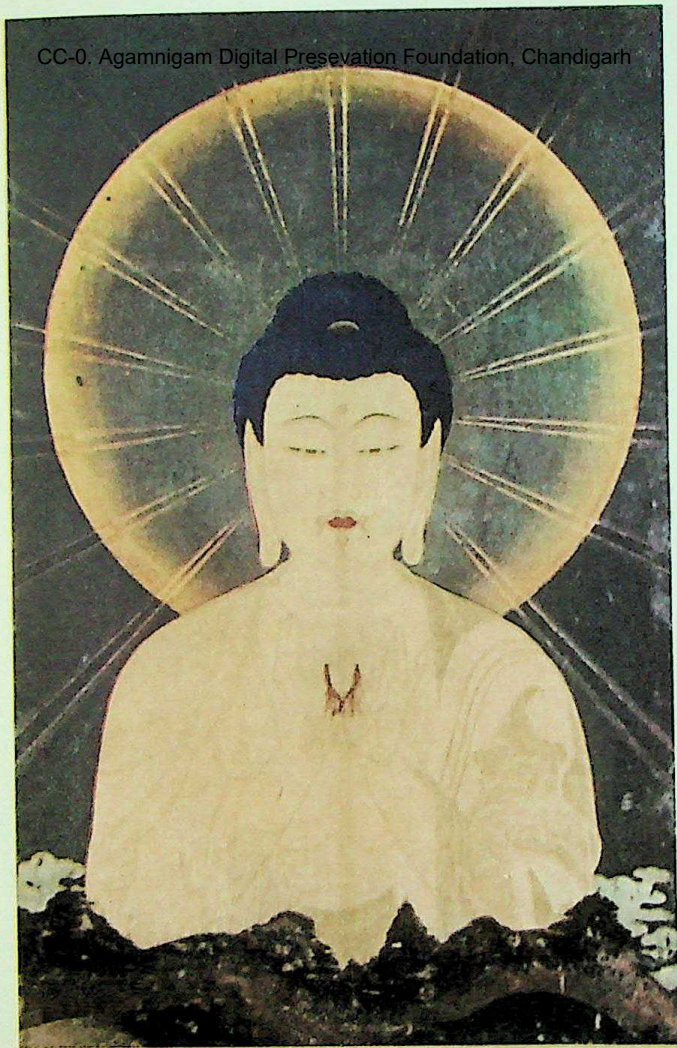
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



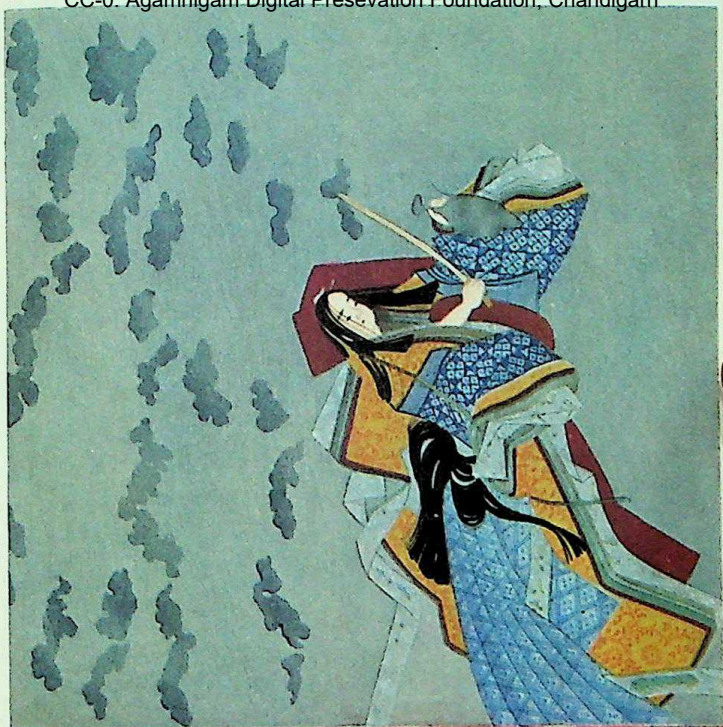
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



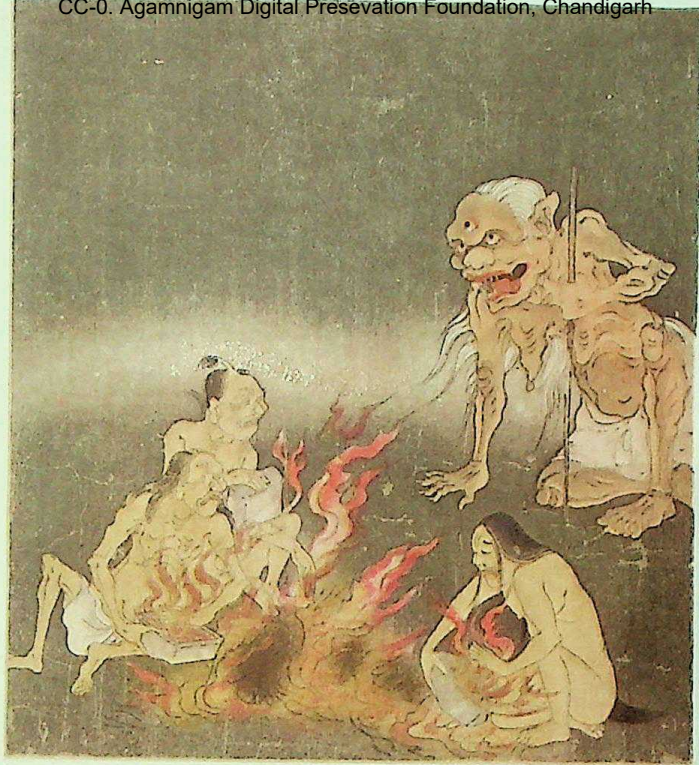
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



妙法蓮華經後地涌出品第十五

余時他方國土諸來菩薩摩訶薩過八恒河

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

ACHEVÉ D'IMPRIMER
EN OCTOBRE 1958 PAR J.-M. MONNIER
CLICHÉS BUSSIÈRE ET NOUEL

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
The Little Library of Art

(Volume numbers in brackets)

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| BRAQUE 1906-1920 (14) | LAUTREC Moulin Rouge (16) |
| CEZANNE Landscapes (13) | MATISSE "Fauve" Period (2) |
| DEGAS Dancers (4) | MODIGLIANI Portraits (10) |
| DEGAS Women dressing (17) | MODIGLIANI Nudes (18) |
| DUFY At the Races (12) | MONDRIAN Paintings (15) |
| JAPANESE ART : | PICASSO Blue and Pink Periods (3) |
| Religious Art (21) | PICASSO Cubist Period (11) |
| Scrolls (22) | PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA |
| From Sesshu to Ukiyo (23) | The Arezzo Frescoes (9) |
| Engravings (24) | RENOIR Children (19) |
| GAUGUIN Tahiti (20) | UTRILLO Montmartre (7) |
| KLEE Magic Squares (6) | VAN GOGH Arles. Saint-Rémy (1) |
| LAUTREC At the Circus (5) | VAN GOGH Auvers-sur-Oise (8) |

In Preparation

- BEN NICHOLSON Paintings
CHAGALL Paintings 1914-1918
GOYA Portraits
RENOIR Nudes

2s 6d net